



Announcement

VEF Fellowship Program for 2016

The Vietnam Education Foundation (VEF)¹ was established by the U.S. Congress in December 2000 as an independent federal agency. VEF's primary purpose is to promote the bilateral relationship between the United States and Vietnam through educational exchanges, both for Vietnamese nationals to pursue graduate and post-graduate studies in the United States in the sciences (natural, physical, and environmental), engineering, mathematics, medicine (including biomedical sciences as well as epidemiology, nutrition, and biostatistics within public health), and technology (including information technology), and for American citizens to teach in the same fields of study in Vietnam.

The Vietnam Education Foundation (VEF) is pleased to announce the 2016 VEF Fellowship Program. The Fellowship application and selection process is open, competitive, and transparent. Applicants do not need to pay any fees in order to apply or be considered for a VEF Fellowship. Winners are chosen based on individual merit, including academic performance and preparation, intellectual capability, English proficiency, and the potential for contribution to scientific education and research in Vietnam.

VEF expects to award approximately 34 Fellowships to Vietnamese nationals to begin graduate studies in the United States in the fall of 2016. Please note that **VEF only accepts applications submitted through our online system.**

ELIGIBILITY

1. **VIETNAMESE by citizenship** and not a permanent resident of Vietnam or a permanent resident or citizen of any other country
2. **College graduate** or undergraduate who will receive at least a Bachelor's degree in a field eligible for support in the VEF Fellowship Program (see item 6 below), no later than July 2016.
3. **GPA**. Overall Grade Point Average (GPA) from a college or university with **at least 7.0/10.0**. Applicants who have completed an undergraduate degree **ONLY** must have at least a GPA of 7.0/10.0. Applicants with an undergraduate GPA from 6.5/10.0 to 7.0/10.0 are eligible to apply **ONLY** if they have a Master's degree with a GPA of at least 7.0/10.0 in the same field as the intended field of study. Juniors or seniors who are applying must have an overall GPA of 7.0/10.0 at the time of application. Grades on other scales must

be converted into a 10-point scale according to VEF guidelines. A grade conversion scale is available at the VEF website: http://www.vef.gov/download/conversion_table.htm.

4. **English Language Proficiency.** The applicant must demonstrate sufficient proficiency in the English language by submitting a Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) score of **at least 61 on the Internet-Based Test (iBT), which is 173 on the Computer-Based Test (CBT), 500 on the Paper-Based Test (PBT), or a score of 6.0 on an International English Language Testing System (IELTS).** A Bachelor's or Master's degree from an English-speaking country is accepted as an equivalent.
5. **GRE (Graduate Record Examination).** All applicants must provide VEF with scores from the GRE General Test taken no earlier than August 1, 2011. ***An official score report must be sent to VEF using the code 8559.***
6. **Field of Study.** Applicants must intend to study a field of study that is authorized by our legislation – **sciences** (natural, physical, and environmental), **mathematics, medicine** (such as public health, epidemiology, and immunology), **engineering, and technology** (including information technology). Fields include the basic sciences, such as biology, chemistry, and physics, as well as agricultural science and computer science. Refer to the VEF website (<http://home.vef.gov/details.php?mid=6&cid=89>) for the list of fields of study supported by VEF. Priority will be given to applicants, whose field of study focuses on climate change (environmental sciences) or on nuclear energy, provided that all other qualifications are equal.

Study toward degrees in architecture, management, policy, business, law, and social science is not eligible for support in the VEF Fellowship Program.

7. **Level and Location of Study.** Applicants must intend to work toward a Master's or a Master's/Ph.D. program at an accredited U.S. educational institution.
8. **Eligibility of VEF Employees and VEF Contracted Agency Employees**
 - a. Employees of VEF, including contractor employees, Board Members, and their immediate families, are ineligible for VEF Fellowships, Visiting Scholar Grants, and U.S. Faculty Scholar Grants for a period ending one year following termination of such employment.
 - b. If a former employee or contractor employee of VEF is otherwise eligible and chooses to apply for a VEF Fellowship, Visiting Scholar Grant, or U.S. Faculty Scholar Grant after the one year period, the VEF Board of Directors must approve the submission of such an application.
 - c. Employees of private and public agencies (excluding educational institutions) under contract to VEF to perform administrative or screening services on behalf of the VEF Fellowship, Visiting Scholar, and/or U.S. Faculty Scholar Programs are ineligible for

VEF Fellowships, Visiting Scholar Grants, and U.S. Faculty Scholar Grants for a period ending one year following the termination of their services for VEF.

9. **Eligibility of applicants who have already enrolled in U.S. graduate programs and previous VEF Fellowship recipients**

- a. Graduate students who are already enrolled and matriculated in a graduate program in the United States or will matriculate earlier than the summer of 2016 are **not** eligible to apply. In order to provide new opportunities for more students in Vietnam, those who have completed a graduate degree in the United States **may not apply**.
- b. Previous VEF Fellowship recipients may **not** re-apply for a VEF Fellowship.

VERY IMPORTANT: Please check the eligibility requirements carefully and meet all requirements listed above by completing the online application form and uploading all required documents on or before the application deadline.

PROGRAM BENEFITS

1. VEF provides a \$27,000 per year grant for 2 years to a U.S. educational institution to support a VEF Fellow in either an M.S. or an M.S./Ph.D. program. The institution must agree to accept this payment in lieu of all expenses, including tuition, fees, stipend, books, and health insurance during the first two years.
2. VEF provides a \$1,000 Professional Development Grant to the Fellow for each of the 2 years of tenure. The U.S. institution is expected to administer these funds, as well as a \$500 Settling-In Allowance that VEF provides at the beginning of the first year of study.
3. VEF offers monthly online meetings to assist Fellows during the graduate school application process. VEF will also provide a one-time review of application essays made by native speakers of English.
4. In advance of the school year, funding is provided for a Health Check in Vietnam and any inoculations required by the U.S. institution.
5. VEF will provide a **Pre-Departure Orientation (PDO), tentatively on June 5-10, 2016**, before the Fellows depart for the United States. PDO participants must arrive on June 5 and depart on June 10. The PDO informs Fellows about important issues regarding their Fellowship, including academic matters, cultural differences, financial arrangements, and legal issues related to their immigration status. Included in the PDO is an outdoor Team Building event, which may involve one day of camping.

During the PDO, official Fellowship documents and immigration documents will be given to the Fellows. Universities that are members of the VEF Alliance will waive the application fee if their institution is one of the selected graduate schools. Additionally, the fees for

sending GRE and TOEFL scores, as well as the graduate school application fees for the 5 selected universities (if they are not members of the VEF Alliance) will be reimbursed at the PDO. ***All VEF Fellows must participate in the PDO or forfeit their fellowship.***

6. VEF also provides airfare to the United States and back at the end of 2 years after completion of a Master's degree or to change sponsorship to the U.S. university for continuing doctoral study.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Fellows are evaluated on the basis of the following criteria:

1. Superior academic achievement, demonstrated through GPA, awards, theses, and publications
2. GRE scores and TOEFL/IELTS scores that are promising for graduate admission (after the review, applicants will still have time to meet the minimum scores required for admission to their chosen universities)
3. Excellence of the Academic Statement
4. Excellence of the Personal Statement
5. Demonstrated communication skills in English sufficient to allow the applicant to succeed at a U.S. graduate institution
6. Demonstrated leadership and potential to contribute to science and technology in Vietnam and potential to contribute to better relations between Vietnam and the United States.

APPLICATION PERIOD

Applications will be available online at the VEF website at: www.vef.gov

From 10:00 a.m., December 10, 2014

To 10:00 a.m., April 10, 2015 (Vietnam time zone)

APPLICATION PROCESS

To prepare for the VEF Fellowship online application, applicants must have the following information and documents ready:

1. **DEGREE CERTIFICATES AND TRANSCRIPTS.** Applicants are required to provide degree certificates and transcripts from undergraduate studies and from graduate studies, if applicable, translated into English with an official notarization or with an official school stamp. Juniors (3rd year undergraduate students) and seniors (4th or final year undergraduate students) who have not yet graduated must upload a certification from their current university.

2. **EVIDENCE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY.** Any one of the following means is acceptable to demonstrate proficiency.

TOEFL. A TOEFL score from a test *taken no earlier than April 10, 2014*, of at least 61 on the Internet-Based Test, which is equivalent to or 173 on the Computer-Based Test (either the International or Institutional exam is acceptable), or 500 on the Paper-Based Test. VEF will accept the Institutional TOEFL to meet the eligibility requirements, but applicants are encouraged to take the International TOEFL instead of the Institutional TOEFL in order to have a valid score in hand when applying to U.S. universities, which do not accept an Institutional TOEFL score. Also, please be aware that most U.S. university graduate schools require an International TOEFL score of 79 or higher. Candidates are encouraged to retake the TOEFL exam even after passing the VEF interview in order to increase their chances of getting admitted, particularly to competitive universities.

The official ETS website (www.ets.org/toefl) provides information about the TOEFL test including format, scores, registration, practice materials, and locations of testing centers in Vietnam and test dates. Please contact IIG Vietnam at (84-4) 3773 2411 or visit their website: www.toefl.com.vn for more information about the test.

IELTS. An acceptable alternative to the TOEFL exam is the IELTS exam. A **minimum score of 6.0** on an IELTS exam *taken no earlier than April 10, 2014* may be used to apply for a VEF Fellowship. For more information, please visit the IELTS website: <http://www.ielts.org/>.

DEGREE FROM AN ENGLISH-SPEAKING COUNTRY. An acceptable alternative to the TOEFL or IELTS test is a degree from an English-speaking country. The applicant must demonstrate that s/he is studying for a Bachelor's or Master's degree or has recently received a Bachelor's or Master's degree from a university that conducts all courses in English in one of the following English-speaking countries: Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom (England, Ireland, Scotland, or Wales), or the United States. The evidence of degree completion from such a university is sufficient evidence of English language proficiency for VEF. Please be aware that U.S. universities may still require an official International TOEFL or IELTS score to apply to graduate schools.

3. **GRE SCORE REPORT.** All applicants must provide VEF with scores from the GRE General Test, since most U.S. programs in science require them as part of the graduate school application process. The minimum required scores vary from university to university, so VEF does not require a particular score for Fellowship applicants. Scores can be no more than five years old because the GRE is only valid for 5 years, so uploaded GRE test scores can be no older than August 1, 2011 for the 2016 applicants. VEF only accepts the official GRE score report.

The official ETS website (www.ets.org/gre) provides information about the GRE test, including format, scores, registration, practice materials, and locations of testing centers and test dates in Vietnam. Please refer to the link:

<https://mygre.ets.org/greweb/action/RegPortal> for test centers, test dates, and seat availability in Hanoi, Danang, and Ho Chi Minh City.

A concordance showing the equivalent scores for the old and new GRE test may be accessed at: www.ets.org/s/gre/pdf/concordance_information.pdf.

IMPORTANT:

If you have not already taken the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) please register for the test as soon as possible.

You MUST list the Vietnam Education Foundation code of 8559 on the GRE registration form as one of the institutions to receive your official GRE score report. In order to find this code from the dropdown menu of the U.S. states in the registration form, please select Virginia (since VEF is located in Arlington, Virginia), and then select the Vietnam Education Foundation.

4. **ACADEMIC AND PERSONAL STATEMENTS.** Each applicant must prepare a one-page Academic Statement and a one-page Personal Statement. The first essay addresses the applicant's academic and scientific background and preparation, previous research, and a description of the study and research proposed at a U.S. graduate school department. The Personal Statement includes information about the applicant's background, practical experience, special interests, and career goals, with some attention to plans after degree completion. Applicants should also address how they might represent Vietnam as students in the United States and how they might represent the United States and contribute to Vietnam upon return. Each essay must be well-organized and composed in excellent English and must not be more than one A4 page single-spaced, using the Times New Roman font of size 12. The quality and content of these essays will be an extremely important factor in determining the applicant's candidacy for a VEF Fellowship.

In your Academic Statement, you may want to consider:

Work and Research Experience

- Narrative on academic and work experience.
- Description of any research undertaken with all terms defined and the significance of the work noted. If no formal research has been completed, a description of a project done as part of coursework may be substituted. Jargon and non-defined terminology should be avoided. While research experience is not required as a part of the VEF application, U.S. graduate programs regard it highly.

Academic Intent

- Proposed field of study and research.
- Objectives and impact of one's proposed research or project(s).

In your Personal Statement, you may want to consider:

Indicators of Past Leadership and Future Plans

- Description of any examples of leadership and involvement in your university or home community.
- Intended future plans upon returning to Vietnam at the completion of the program of study.
- Contribution of your proposed research or project(s) to the development of science and technology in Vietnam.

Building the Relationship between the United States and Vietnam

- Provide three significant reasons for wanting to pursue a graduate degree program in the United States on a VEF Fellowship. Objectives must be stated clearly with explanations about how a VEF Fellowship would help you achieve your stated objectives.
- Describe how you would help fulfill the mission of VEF as a Fellowship recipient.
- Describe any special role you would expect to play as a VEF Fellow.
- Describe how you expect to build professional ties between the United States and Vietnam.
- Describe how you could be a cultural representative of Vietnam when in the United States and how you might serve as a cultural representative of the United States when you return to Vietnam.

5. **THREE LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION OR REFERENCE.** Three letters of recommendation or reference must be provided by professors, under whom the applicant has studied or undertaken research. Work supervisors may also provide letters of reference for applicants who are working in a profession that relates to the proposed study. Referees should know the applicant well and can comment on the applicant's ability and creativity, especially in the area of scientific research. Letters must be written in English on official letterhead and must be signed by the referee. The referee should demonstrate familiarity with the applicant by giving specific examples of interactions and situations observed by the writer that exemplify the outstanding qualities of the applicant.
6. **U.S. UNIVERSITIES.** VEF is committed to assuring that VEF Fellows have the best possible opportunity to acquire high-quality knowledge and training in their field of specialization in order to become leading scientists and engineers in Vietnam. Participation in such programs accords esteem to the VEF Fellow's home country of Vietnam as well as honor to the U.S. university that hosts the VEF Fellow and to the United States for sponsoring such an outstanding individual. VEF suggests, therefore, that the applicant, and eventually the Fellow, select universities that provide excellent academic programs and research to meet these goals.

Applicants must list **5 U.S. universities** and the relevant departments in which they wish to study, including the major within that department, while providing the reasons why each university has been chosen. In addition, applicants must supply the names and titles

of **2 professors with whom they would like to study at each university**, including the reason why the particular advisors or professors were selected. To meet this requirement, VEF advises applicants to **research U.S. universities, the relevant departments and majors, and potential research advisors or professors** well in advance of the application period. Applicants may wish to consult rankings of graduate programs as guidance, such as the National Academies rankings:

(<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B4u7mZI8VLj4S09nSE1leFpDLVE/edit?usp=sharing>).

Applicants might also refer to the [VEF Alliance Schools](#), listed at the VEF website. These schools are top-level U.S. universities that accept VEF financial terms and conditions. In addition, applicants should utilize the EducationUSA advising centers (located in the U.S. Embassy in Hanoi and in the U.S. Consulate General in Ho Chi Minh City) and their resources to find the universities that best fit their academic needs and areas of study.

While applicants should consider top schools, departments, and research advisors in their chosen fields, they should also consider “safety schools” to which to apply. A safety school may not be ranked at the top tier, but may still be an excellent school that will allow applicants to achieve their professional goals. VEF suggests choosing 3 to 4 top-tier schools and 1 to 2 safety schools among the 5 schools for which VEF will provide financial support during the application process.

Any missing information or documents will result in an automatic rejection of the application. VEF cannot accept incomplete applications and cannot extend the deadline. Do not forget to SUBMIT your application when it is complete.

FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEWS

Applicants who meet the minimum eligibility requirements will be invited to face-to-face interviews with prominent U.S. professors in STEM fields. In late July-early August 2015, Oral Exams/Interviews will be conducted in English for 30 to 45 minutes in Hanoi or Ho Chi Minh City. The U.S. interviewers will recommend the applicants that they deem most qualified. Interviewers also confirm or reject the universities that the applicants have selected for application to graduate school and suggest other appropriate programs. The best candidates are designated as VEF *Fellows* and the rest of the recommended applicants become VEF *Alternates*. The Alternates will fill the award slots of Fellows, who withdraw from the program, or who are not accepted to a U.S. university. The recommended Fellows and Alternates are all encouraged to apply to at least 5 U.S. graduate institutions.

APPLYING TO GRADUATE SCHOOL AT A U.S. INSTITUTION

In the fall of 2015, VEF will help the Fellows and Alternates to apply to 5 competitive U.S. universities, which have been approved or recommended by the U.S. interviewers. VEF must approve any changes to this list. Universities that belong to the VEF Alliance (http://home.vef.gov/alliance_university.php) are familiar with the VEF terms and will waive

application fees for the 5 recommended universities for VEF Fellows. Alternates who become Fellows early enough in the process may also get a fee remission from VEF Alliance Schools. Fellows may enroll at universities that are not members of the VEF Alliance if that university agrees to VEF's financial terms, which are available under "VEF Fellowship Program/Resources for Applicants" at the VEF website:

(http://home.vef.gov/download/Basic_Financial_Terms_of_VEF_fellowship_grant.pdf). If the Fellows and Alternates give their consent, their contact and application information will be sent to all VEF Alliance universities so that these universities may recruit them. The universities may offer their own full funding, if they wish.

IMPORTANT CHANGE!

In accordance with the legislation that established VEF, we will award our last two rounds of Fellowships for the Academic Years 2015 and 2016. While VEF will no longer be awarding new Fellowships after 2016, VEF will transition to the next phase of strengthening the bi-lateral relationship between Vietnam and the United States, and the U.S. government efforts on educational exchanges between the U.S. and Vietnam will continue.

VEF will continue to provide the same financial support to Fellows as in the past. In each of the first 2 years of study in the United States, VEF will provide a grant of \$27,000 to the university and a \$1000 Professional Development Grant to the Fellows through the university. During the first year of study, VEF will also provide a \$500 Settling-In Allowance. However, due to the end of VEF funding in fiscal year 2018, VEF will no longer be able to sponsor Fellows beyond the first 2 years of study. Therefore, those who are awarded VEF Fellowships for 2015 and 2016 must apply for a Master's degree or a Master's/Ph.D. degree from U.S. universities. This will enable VEF to sponsor Fellows for the first two years of study, and then assist in a smooth transfer to the U.S. university immigration sponsorship, if a Fellow wishes to continue study in a Ph.D. program. VEF will work with Fellows, universities and the U.S. embassy or consulate in Vietnam to facilitate this process.

The changes can be summarized as follows:

1. VEF Fellows in the 2015 and 2016 cohorts must apply to a U.S. university either for a Master's degree or a Master's/Ph.D. degree.
2. The admission document must indicate either admission to a Master's degree program or to a Master's/Ph.D. program.
3. VEF issues immigration documents for a two-year period.
4. Those Fellows who wish to continue study in a Ph.D. program or need additional time to complete the Master's program will need to continue their study on the immigration sponsorship of the university. VEF will facilitate this process.
5. VEF will provide a return air ticket to Vietnam for all VEF Fellows in the 2015 and 2016 cohorts at the end of two years. Those continuing their studies in a Master's or Ph.D.

program will need to obtain new immigration documents from the U.S. university and apply for a new visa from the U.S. embassy or consulate in Vietnam in order to return to the United States to complete their program.

FELLOWSHIP AWARDS

By March 28, 2016, Fellows and Alternates must upload ALL their university admission letters and financial forms to the VEF Online Management System (OMS). VEF financial support forms must be completed by all admitting universities, whether they are members of the VEF Alliance or not. Both Fellows and Alternates should indicate their preferred universities in priority order. After the March 28 deadline, VEF will confirm the university selected by the Fellow or Alternate, as long as the acceptance is without conditions and the program offered by the university meets program guidelines. Alternates may receive an award if a Fellow withdraws from the competition or does not receive admission from a university that agrees to VEF's financial terms. The final decision will be made in advance of the April 15, 2016 deadline, by which U.S. universities require that incoming graduate students accept or reject offers of admission.

At the Pre-Departure Orientation, Fellows or Alternates who become Fellows will be reimbursed the following: (1) Fees for GRE and TOEFL score reports sent to the five approved schools; and (2) application fees that are not waived by the university.

After obtaining a VEF Fellowship, all Fellows must strictly observe VEF rules and requirements or they may lose the Fellowship. Note: VEF reserves the right to make changes to programs as circumstances require. Any changes will be posted on VEF's official website at www.vef.gov.

If you have any questions regarding the VEF 2016 Fellowship application and selection process, please e-mail VEF at vef2016@vef.gov or phone VEF at (84-4) 3936 3670 in Hanoi, Vietnam.

For more information on VEF and the VEF Fellowship Program,
please visit the VEF website: www.vef.gov